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Dr. King is Dead and so is Rosa Parks!

Edward Earl Bell

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Joy Chapter #314 Order of the Eastern Star

Thanks to Mr. Williams for the invitation, and the members of the Joy Chapter Order of the Eastern Star for their acceptance. It is my pleasure to speak this evening—and to celebrate the history of Black Americans! We thank God—and give Him the thanks!

*May we bow and reflect on yesterday and the future.*

Our God in ages past, our hope for years to come, be our guide, Oh Lord; free us from the pain and troubles of this world; help us to bear the strain of life and the toil of discrimination in the fret of racism; free us master. We thank you for the progress and for the advancement.

Oh God of mercy, with your wisdom and power, we have come in the interest of all people, of all color, creeds, and orientations, genders, and beliefs.

Please us Lord with your love; rid us of our selfishness; bind us together with cords of sympathy and circles of friendliness; make us alert to the call of the present, and remind us that we still have work to do—dying communities and troubled souls.

Dear Master, we ask for your continued guidance that drove King to dream, Fannie Lou Hammer to speak and Rosa Parks to sit; channel our minds and convict us to do more than history requires; and Master in the age of our accountability—we have a charge to keep and a God to glorify.

Give us the courage to do what is right for all people; for all God’s children; we pray God’s blessings upon this day; that is set aside to record the history of Black Americans, the month of February.

But Lord, give us the intelligence to realize that it takes more than just the month of February; bless the devoted members of Joy Chapter; bless the waiting congregation, bless the friends and supporters who have assembled, not just to hear about history, but the charting of a new day for the future; thank you God for keeping us; thank you God for protecting us; knowing that there is more work to be done in the Village.

Lord have mercy upon us; as we live up to the creed that all men/women are created equal; Father God, we turn our face once again toward you and in Thanksgiving; we thank you so much for allowing us to be just a tiny portion on your planet; we thank you for this great land, this great America; we thank you God for your abundance; so today Master, we are working on building up our communities; building up our Black males Father God; you know they are in need of a foundation; have mercy on us all.

Master, our community is in need of construction workers; we need to break down walls of divisions; build bridges of love and patience; breakdown walls of hatred and racism; we need bridges of unity and commitment; merciful sweet Master, we need more care, patience, and understanding in the community, and we look to you; make us alert to the call of the present that can inspire many people, in Jesus precious name, Amen.

For the record, I am no preacher, not a pastor. I haven't studied at any seminary. No biblical scholar or deacon; no chairman of any church boards; no choir member, no trustee member. I am just a church member with a purpose and a vision.
Having said what I am not, this is who I am. I am just a boy named Edward Earl Bell, born to Betecher and Lucille Bell, two other brothers, one deceased and one living; father to one.

I am just a boy who spent a decade plus living in Craven Terrace, Q2 323 Craven Terrace. I'm just a boy who tries to give as good as he gets.

I am just a boy who realizes that it was the prayers of those who are long gone, that made him into who he is today. I'm just a boy. Here is when I became a man. When you can keep your head when all about you, are losing theirs and blaming it on you; If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you; but make allowance for their doubting too; if you can wait and not be tired of waiting or being lied about, don't deal in lies or being hated, don't give way to hating; and yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise—then, Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it—and which is more—then, you will become a man!

My delivery this evening is not going to engender shouts, tongue speaking, or emotional highs, but it will spark a refocus on what matters in the present—our precious resource, our community—and further a call to action and opportunity to create history—a new day.

Because we are in church, we are conditioned to say, what was his text, what did he talk about? What was his topic? To those who ask, tell them that Dr. King is dead! Tell them that Frederick Douglas is gone. Harriett Tubman led hundreds to freedom. Malcolm X was murdered, and Barack Obama was elected president and serving his last term. I say this to say, we cannot rely on history to prepare our future. History reminds us of a past; it cannot carry us into the future. History has a purpose. And we shall never forget slavery; we shall not forget the bitterness; we shall not forget those turbulent years to gain equality. We shall never forget the lynchings, killings, and hatred toward Black Americans, in particular. We do pause and give honor to our heroic Black Americans who made this day possible.

So, my topic, text, what did he talk about, my theme—is simply put. Dr. King is dead—and so is, Rosa Parks.

So on this evening, the days after the snow, sleet, rain, when many thought they had been forsaken; on this recorded day, on this the Lord’s day, it is February 15, 2014!! My brothers and sisters!

While history has its place and while we must understand the significance of it, we cannot feed our egos and thump our chests based on what we did. We cannot talk or walk in the past tense. I did. I marched. I rode. I gave. I was jailed. I was beaten. I was a freedom rider. I attended the 1963 march. I help to integrate the school, the bus station. That's in the past. Good for you, for doing what was morally right! In today’s world and given the problems in the black community, we must focus on the present. This is 2014—and the 60’s strategies do not seem to address the needs of 2014; often we say, I remember; we didn’t do that; these kids; our parents didn’t allow that; this is 2014. I believe, we might need to ask ourselves—what have we done lately.

Allow me to bring us to the present: I want to reflect on the current state of affairs; the state of Black Americans here in America/North Carolina/Craven County; we see the mass incarceration of black males and the quest to criminalize them; the over-representation of poverty in black communities, the overuse of the term thuggish towards black boys; the everlasting onslaught on black males and the poor; a system of classicism that is rooted not merely on race—but on who we are and where we work. We see here in the City of New Bern to fight to
integrate a board to demonstrate equal representation for all citizens—even in 2014. Black Americans still fight to be at the table of decision-making.

We see black students placed in alternative learning programs more than other ethnic group; we see the continuation of the highest dropout rates among Hispanic, black and American Indians; we see, here, in Craven County, black males and females leading short-term suspensions; we see one elementary school in Craven County, where Whites students comprise of 30% of Level 4’s in math and blacks only 8% on the same level.

Hear me: Dr. King is dead, and so, is Rosa Parks. We have the present to deal with!

My brothers and sisters, many in our communities have given up on hope, and the lack of faith has eclipsed the spirit of our greatness—despair and hopelessness, beset many of our young, and dreams deferred, put-downs and being made to feel inferior—is so commonplace in homes, and in our communities.

The negative depiction of black males in the media is a cause for concern. We have an obligation to counteract and call out the negative portrayal of black males; people tend to believe what they see; we all know the Trayvon Martin story—the hoodie—for some a symbol of thuggish behavior—yet we in the black community allowed perceptions to persist; even so, in the movies, the black man is the first to be killed; what is so interesting is that, we expect his death; however, the movie doesn’t end; it continues without the black man in the movie. We must watch these portrayals. We watch Scandal, Mary Jane, the Have and Have Nots; putting black females in a negative role. Yet, we glorify what we see—keep in mind, others are watching; and not all sisters will steal your man—or have affairs with white married men. We need to watch this!!!!

Let’s not forget, we have present day problems. Teen suicide, academic failure, cyber bullying, no voting among those who need to run to the polls, rampant poverty, lack of adequate parenting, lack of connectedness to a global world, and too much reliance and waiting on superman to rescue us.

Just imagine, if we spent, in black churches, less time on same-sex marriage debates and more time addressing what really destroys black families: drugs, lack of education, mass incarceration of black males, alarming suspension rates, academic failure, and poverty; these concerns should be an abomination to our Christian consciousness.

My brothers and sisters; Superman ain’t coming!!!! Waiting to fulfill someone else’s dream defies logic; the dreamer is Dead. Dr. King is dead, and so is Rosa Parks!

We live in a world where dreaming has its place. But more important, singing Lift every voice and sing and not singing, I’m on the battlefield for my lord, doesn't help when singing God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, when we can't sing, If I can help somebody, then my living won’t be in vain; it doesn't matter to sing Lest our feet stray from the places for our God where we meet thee, if we can't sign, May the work I've done speak for me.

Doesn’t matter to sing Facing the rising sun of our new day begun when we can’t sing, When I woke up this morning, I didn’t have no doubt, I knew the Lord when bring me out; it does us no good to sing Sony the road we trod, bitter the chastening ride, when we can’t sing, by Marvin Gaye: What’s Happening Brother—Can’t find work, can’t find no job, money is tighter than it’s ever been: Say man, I just don’t understand: hey, what’s happening brother!

The dream becomes personal when work till a new day has come. When we rest on our work and not the dreams of others, then we can say with a loud voice. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and
righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. When Darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.

Celebrating black history showcases accomplishments; it does not end the dream. Freedom begs for more; other than the deaths of our ancestors. We have a charge to keep and a God to glorify. We cannot rest till our day is done. We need a new history.

We can no longer accept past strategies to deal with current day problems. What worked in the 1960’s might not work in 2014. We must understand that Raheem was not born in the 1906’s; he doesn’t know the struggle or appreciate the song, *We shall overcome!* Raheem can now eat wherever his money spends; and marry whomever he desires. He cannot envision white and black colored fountains. We cannot become angry, when he does not live in your history.

We must have educated people in all aspects of this journey! In today’s world, we compete with technology and sophistication at all levels. Therefore, our leaders, must be present themselves, with intelligence and knowledge.

I offer you five things to actualize what we can do immediately:

- Redesign “Sunday schools”
- Research and study what is effective
- Education
- Vote
- Community programs

Sunday school is ripe for advancing reading comprehension. Historically, Sunday school was a place to teach wayward children, and not necessarily a place for Christian education. We have the ability to work with schools and Sunday Schools to improve the reading levels of students; we have the ability to make this happen. How: Meeting with the English/Language Arts teachers. The Bible is replete with metaphors; well, teacher, what is a metaphor? It is a figure of speech: to show a likeness, being similar or an analogy, symbol, a comparison between things or objects at opposite ends; now let’s apply it:

Water represents, truth and knowledge; we all need spiritual watering and nurturing. *If a man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* In other words, If a man thirst for spiritual knowledge. You see, water, is a most frequently used metaphor. Just imaging, literature being taught in Sunday School. The Bible is ripe with personification, similes, and parables; literary terms taught in school. Let’s bring the two institutions together.

Secondly:

In today’s world, education is key. Training beyond high just makes sense in 2014. We must instill this way of thinking, from the pulpit to the parking lot, from every community, and in every church; there must be the examples of academic achievements and not quick fixes to learning that belittles the field of academics, sending a very troubling message to the young; that degrees worthy of secular employment must be regionally accredited—that affords gainful employment wherever your CV (Resume) (might land).

We must uphold academic standards that can translate into mobility and advancement. We must not allow weak and watered down degrees that insult our people, from those lacking the skills to even lead a discussion on metaphors or to understand the meaning of scholarship. We must not allow this!!!!
School is a place for learning. Our kids cannot afford to fail school; they must pass. We in the church must become examples of academic excellence and degrees worthy of employment beyond the church.

Thirdly:

We must read and become consumers as thinkers and have intellectual curiosity. No longer, can we accept what use to work; we got to learn new ways and engage in new strategies. Christian education should be educational driven, with biblical teaching, academic preparation, and life-long learning; we must develop skills to teach and to nurture the whole community and the families that we serve. The strategies of the 60’s will not free us from what troubles the souls of many in 2014.

Fourthly:

We need ongoing social/cultural programs that address the whole child. We have churches on every corner and a lack of services to address the community needs; we must do better and invest in our children, they are begging and needing our support. Just shouting on Sundays won’t work.

Fifthly:

Voting; we can’t claim if we don’t vote. No need to stay home on election day; take a friend and encourage an enemy.

And when we have done all that we can, we need to ask ourselves and seek the favor of God.

If I could sing, I would—but since I can’t, I give you: Andrae Crouch in words:

Lord, We need to hear from you
We need a word from you
If we don't hear from you
What will we do
Wanting you more each day
Show us your perfect way
There is no other way
That we can live

Destruction is now is now in view
Seems the world has forgotten all about you
Children are crying and people are dying
They're lost without you, so lost without you
But you said if we seek
Lord if we seek your face
And turn from our wicked, our wicked ways
You promised to heal our land
Father you can’

There is no other way
There is no other way
There is no other way
That we can live

At end the end of our journey, we must ask—
Lord, how much is enough?